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AUTHOR Slaughter, Helen B.; Haussler, Myna
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ABSTRACT

The Chapter 1 Language Enrichment Communicative Skills Project served students in eleven Tucson Arizona elementary schools in the primary grades during the 1983-84 school year. The project provided supplementary instruction in oral language interaction and developmental reading and writing in small groups. Students were selected on the basis of greatest need in terms of academic and sociolinguistic competencies related to success in school. The evaluation results indicated that first grade students attained the objective of improvement in terms of relative status in relation to national norms on the California Achievement Test, Reading Subtest, but that second-grade participants did not. However, when grade two students were retested out-of-level at the end of grade two on the same reading test that they took at the end of grade one, the results showed that the students had achieved a statistically significant raw score gain. Students' writing samples indicated that their writing improved in both content and form. Appendices contain: (1) the Teacher Observation Measure of Communicative Competencies; (2) achievement test data; (3) the Sustained Gains Study of the First Cohort; and (4) the descriptive analysis of writing samples. (Author/DWH)

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Abstract

The Chapter I Language Enrichment Communicative Skills Project served approximately 365 students in eleven elementary schools in the primary grades, mostly grades one and two, in the 1983-84 school year. The project provided supplementary instruction in oral language interaction and developmental reading and writing in small groups. Students participating in the project were selected on the basis of greatest need in terms of academic and sociolinguistic competencies related to success in school.

The evaluation results showed that first grade students attained the objective by achieving a mean Normal Curve Equivalent score of 38.4, or a percentile rank of 29.1, on the California Achievement Test, Reading Subtest. Second grade participants did not meet the objective of improving in terms of relative status in relation to national norms. Second grade participants attained a mean Normal Curve Equivalent of 30.8, or a percentile rank of 18.2; this was virtually the same level that the group who were pre-posttested had been at the previous spring when they were tested at the end of grade one. However, when grade two students were retested out-of-level at the end of grade two on the same reading test that they took at the end of grade one, the results showed that the students had achieved a statistically significant raw score gain of 13.6 points. Students writing samples, collected in fall and spring, indicated that their writing improved in terms of both content and form. Recommendations for program improvement are included in the report.

Chapter I Evaluation Report for the

Language Enrichment Communicative Skills Project

1983-84

Project Description

The Chapter I Language Enrichment Communicative Skills (LECS) Project was initiated in the fall of 1981 to provide supplementary assistance to students in the early childhood years, especially in grades one and two, who were identified as high risk or low achievers in terms of oral language communicative skills or beginning reading and writing skills. The project was designed to provide small group instruction, usually on a pullout basis, by a LECS project specialist in meaningful oral language interaction, and developmental whole language reading and writing activities.

Group size was limited to seven students in order to provide frequent opportunities for student verbal interaction with the teacher and peers in various high interest instructional content areas, (within which the language arts skills of thinking, listening, speaking, reading and writing could be integrated). LECS classes were generally scheduled four times a week for 30 to 45 minutes. Encouraging students to develop their own approach to reading and writing, and providing many varied language arts activites in meaningful contexts, was an important program feature.

The project is research based and is attempting to apply recent research in the area of beginning reading that emphasizes the importance of developmental writing in learning to read (Sulzby, 1981). The importance of providing increased opportunities for low achieving students to learn how to participate in classroom discourse, and the importance of sustained teacher and student oral language interaction is also supported in numerous research studies (Cazden, in press; Au & Kawakami, 1984; Goodlad, 1984; Wilkinson & Spinelli, 1983; Anderson, Everson, & Brophy, 1978).

The LECS Project served approximately 369 students in grades one and two in eleven Chapter I elementary schools. (A few schools, e.g., Drachman and Safford, included kindergarten students, and some LECS teachers worked with a very small number of grade three students on a limited basis). Schools with LECS projects were Cavett, Drachman, Hollinger, Manzo, Mission View, Ochoa, Pueblo Gardens, Richey, Rose, Safford and Van Buskirk.

Student Selection

Students were selected into the LECS project on the basis of teacher ratings or referrals indicating that the student was below average in relation to others in his or her age group in terms of oral language interactional skills and early literacy: teacher ratings were verified by test scores indicating that the student scored in a percentile rank range of 1-30 on a standardized test.

Evaluation Design

Students were tested in April 1984 on the Reading subtest of the California Achievement Test, Form C (CAT/C). Objectives established for Chapter I LECS students were as follows:

1. First grade participants will attain a mean Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) of 36.5 or higher on the CAT/C Reading test: in addition, the number and percentage of students scoring at or above the 25th percentile, (NCE=35.8), will be reported.

2. Second grade LECS participants will attain a significant mean NCE pre-posttest gain on the CAT/C Reading subtest, administered at grade level in April 1983 (when the students were in first grade) and in April 1984.

3. Second grade LECS participants will attain a significant mean raw score on the CAT/C Reading subtest between pretesting on grade level at the end of first grade and retesting out-of-level on the same level of the test, (the test used for first grade students), at the end of grade two.

4. LECS participants will show improvement in their understanding of the writing process and their ability to express themselves in writing as determined by writing samples collected in fall and spring.

In addition to the above, LECS and classroom teachers evaluated improvement in student oral language communicative competencies by rating students pre-and post on the Teacher Observation Measure of Communicative Competencies. (See Appendix A). This information was used at the school level to provide diagnostic information regarding student competencies and needs. LECS teachers also audiotaped a small sample of students pre-and post in a story telling task (adapted from King and Rentel, 1981).

Evaluation Results

Objective 1. First grade LECS participants exceeded the objective. The mean NCE was 38.4 which is equivalent to a percentile rank of 29.1 for the 137 students tested (83 percent of the first grade students were tested). Seventy-seven students, or 56.6 percent, scored at or above the twenty-fifth percentile rank on the CAT/C, Reading subtest. Results for first grade students listed by school are shown in Table A in Appendix B.

Objective 2. Grade two LECS students did not meet the objective of improving in terms of nationally normed status scores between annual spring testing on the CAT/C Reading subtest. Instead the average student NCE mean remained at virtually the same level for two years in a row, as shown in Table B in Appendix B. The students' posttest mean of 30.8 was equivalent to a percentile rank of 18.2. The group pre-and posttested, 127, was only 59% of the group of 215 served, so these results are not completely representative of all grade two Chapter I students. This lack of representativeness is partly due to new

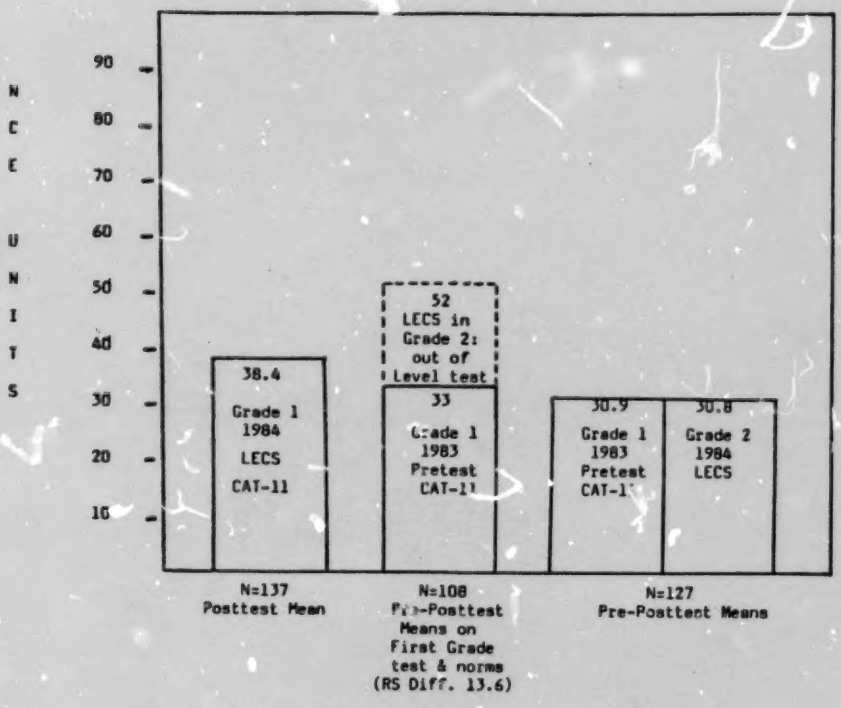
entrants from other school districts into the project and may also be due to some bilingual participants not tested at the end of first grade.

In previous years, grade two Chapter I students have shown losses between the end of grades one and two. For instance, in the 1982-83 evaluation, grade two students had gone from an NCE mean of 29.58 at the end of grade one to an NCE mean of 25.82 at the end of grade two, an NCE drop of 3.76. Therefore, both in terms of relative stability and actual mean performance level, the 1983-84 grade two results showed an improvement over the previous years evaluation.

Objective 3. Grade two LECS students met the objective of attaining significant raw score gains between pre- and posttesting on the first grade CAT/C reading test, level 11, administered at the end of first grade and again, (with posttesting out-of-level), at the end of grade two. The raw score mean at the end of grade one was 27.6 and this increased by 13.6 points to a raw score mean of 41.2 ($p < .001$) at the end of grade 2 (see Table C in the Appendix). The group of 108 students tested was approximately 50% of the 215 students served in grade two.

Chart 1 summarizes the results from testing LECS participants on the CAT/C Reading Subtest. Column two in the chart presents a picture of what the achievement level, in terms of NCE scores, would be if the grade two LECS participants were compared with the national norms for first grade students; this information indicates that the achievement of LECS students, by the end of second grade, is higher than 54 percent of first grade students. When these students were in first grade their achievement was higher than only 21 percent of other first grade students, on the average. The data from the out-of-level testing indicates that LECS students are showing developmental growth despite the fact that compared to students nationally in their own grade level, as shown in the last two columns in Chart 1, they are remaining at the same relative place.

Chart 1. Reading Achievement: LECS



A sustained gains study conducted of former LECS participants over a three year period from the end of first grade to the end of second and third grade indicated that LECS students show greater growth relative to other children in their grade level at the end of third grade. (See Appendix C, for a brief report on the Sustained Gains Study).

Objective 4. Student writing, which was analyzed on a sample basis, indicated that LECS students understood that writing is used to communicate meaning. Students wrote for a variety of purposes and in a variety of forms. Their work showed improvement from the beginning of the year to the end in terms of content, length of the writing sample, spelling, sentence structure, capitalization, and punctuation. Since the student's writing was presented in a separate report, the details of the evaluation will not be repeated here; instead, a summary of the report, Descriptive Analysis of Writing Samples Collected in LECS Centers During the School Year, 1983-84 is found in Appendix D.

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Limitations:

Test results in the appendix are reported separately by school as well for the entire project group. However, the sample of students at any one school is usually too small, i.e. under 30, for one to expect to see statistical significance. Then too, the group who were present for both the pretest and the posttest, is often smaller than the two-thirds or 66.6% needed to be considered representative of the group served in the LECS project. This lack of representativeness was a problem in interpreting both the on-level and out-of-level grade two results on the CAT/C, reading subtest.

The difficulty level of the CAT/C reading tests, when administered on grade level, also poses a problem in evaluating the progress of extremely low-achieving young children, many of whom are acquiring English as a second language. Standardized tests are not yet available that incorporate literacy acquisition and emergent reading for children aged five to seven years old. Out-of-level testing could not be done with first grade students because the available tests used to measure beginning reading, usually called reading readiness tests, are not valid measures of developmental reading (Sulzby, 1984).

Recommendations

Recommendations for the LECS project are based upon process evaluation, including monitoring and ethnographic classroom observations, as well as upon the data analyzed for this report. Recommendations for the project are as follows:

1. It is recommended that inservice and staff development meetings be held on a semi-monthly basis for the LECS project. Because the project is attempting to implement innovative and individualized approaches to oral and written language development that extend beyond traditional methods, it is especially important that the staff be provided with the latest information concerning promising methods for increasing the school success of low achieving students. This is especially necessary when there is a large percentage of new staff implementing the project as was true in the 1983-84 school year.

2. There is a need to inservice the regular classroom teachers in developmental approaches to early literacy, and effective approaches to encouraging the oral participation of low-achieving students in instructional discourse.

3. There is a need for criterion referenced or out-of-level reading testing, (as in administering the first grade CAT again at the end of grade 2), so that the difficulty of the test level will provide a better measure of the student's developmental level rather than simply reporting their status attainment growth in terms of national norms.

4. There is a need to reemphasize the importance to both Chapter I and regular classroom teachers of increasing students "response opportunities" for extended or elaborated discourse during instructional activities. As literacy becomes a focus of instruction, the importance of oral language developmental activities at times appears to be neglected. Yet the research indicated that sustained teacher-child verbal interaction and corrective teacher feedback on an individual basis is extremely important in the development of literacy.

Endnote. An ethnographic study involving observations of students oral discourse interaction during instruction and literacy acquisition and instruction in both LECS Centers (pullout), and in the regular classroom, begun in 1983-84 and now in progress, is being conducted. The first report on this study is anticipated for February, 1985.

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Appendix A

Teacher Observation Measure of Communicative Competencies*

*Note. The same form is used for K-3. This scale was developed by Slaughter, H., 1982, with the assistance of LECS teachers, (Copywright, © 1984).

Student Communicative Competencies Inventory
Teacher Observation Measure: Chapter I Project

School _____ Person rating student: ___ Classroom teacher ___ Chapter I teacher

Name of Classroom Teacher _____ Name of Chapter I teacher _____

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Student's last name, first name grade matric birth mo/yr date

Student's language(s) ___ English ___ Spanish ____ Other (_____)

English oral language proficiency ___ high ___ average ___ low ___ don't know
Spanish oral language proficiency ___ high ___ average ___ low ___ don't know

---

Language rated on this form: ___ English ___ Spanish ___ Other

Note: If rating two languages, mark E for English, S for Spanish, O for Other. If the behavior is NOT OBSERVED put N.O. in the space to the right of the item (if not applicable, mark N.A.).

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1. Communication Contexts	Usually Adequate	Sometimes Adequate	Seldom Adequate
a. One-to-one with adult ___	_____	_____	_____
b. One-to-one with peer ___	_____	_____	_____
c. Small self-chosen peer group ___	_____	_____	_____
d. Small instructional group ____	_____	_____	_____
e. Whole group ___	_____	_____	
f. Adapts to change in setting ___	_____	_____	_____

Comment:

2. Communicative Repertoire	Usually Adequate	Sometimes Adequate	Seldom Adequate
a. Tells stories ___	_____	_____	_____
b. Retells events ____	_____	_____	_____
c. Explains how to do or make something ___	_____	_____	_____
d. Talks on a variety of topics ___	_____	_____	_____
e. Gives elaborated responses to teacher's questions ___	_____	_____	_____

Comment:

3. Interactional Competencies	Yes	Sometimes	No
a. Asks teacher questions or for assistance ___			
b. Asks peers questions or for asssistance ___			
c. Initiates conversation ___			
d. When talking, holds the attention of others ___			
e. Builds meaningfully on utterances of others ___			
f. Has social skills, e.g., appropriate turn-taking, can maintain or terminate a conversation ___			
g. Appropriate nonverbal behavior, e.g., gestures ___			
h. Shows awareness of listener needs, e.g., recycles, repairs, clarifies ___			

Comment:

4. Interactive Conversation with Teacher	Almost Always	Sometimes	Rarely
a. Speech is comprehensible ___			
b. Short one-word or clause responses to questions are adequate ___			
c. Elaborates coherently on self-selected topics ___			
d. Elaborates coherently on "instructional" topics ___			

Comment:

Note: If rating the student in Spanish or another language how do you rate your own proficiency in the other language? ___ high ___ medium ___ low

5. Achievement	Usually	Sometimes	Seldom or Never
A. Early literacy acquisition:			
1. Names letters ___			
2. Understands print conveys meaning ___			
3. Understands concept of words as separate symbols ___			
4. Can produce rhyming words ___			
5. Dictates stories ___			
6. Writes letters ___			
7. Writes words ___			
8. Uses or attemps to use writing to communicate longer messages (clauses, paragraphs, stories) ___			
9. When writing longer messages, uses inital sounds in writing words ___			
10. Listens and comprehends meaning when stories are read to him/her ___			
11. Knows text is read from left to right, top to bottom ___			
12. Can read what he/she was written ___			
13. "Reads" aloud books well known, e.g. pattern books, in informal classroom situations ___			
14. Reads environmental print in classroom ___			
15. Reads and comprehends trade books ___			
B. Basal reader placement or alternative approach			

Comments (see next page)

Comments: Diagnostic-Prescriptive Narrative about Student's learning strengths, zone of proximal development:

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Appendix B

Achievement Data on the CAT/C Reading Subtest for Chapter 1 LECS Students

Table A. Evaluation Results for Grade One LECS Students on the CAT/c, 111, Reading Subtest, April 1984

School	N	Posttest		N/% Scoring at or above the 25th Percentile (NCE 35.8)	
		Mean	S.D.	Number	Percent
Cavett	17	41.8	19.6	12	70.6
Drachman	6	38.8	14.7	3	50.0
Hollinger	15	53.7	24.2	11	73.3
Lawrence	3	27.0	-	0	0.0
Manzo	14	29.6	10.7	5	35.7
Mission View	10	33.4	21.7	4	40.0
Ochoa	5	60.2	12.5	5	100.0
Pueblo Gardens	9	26.2	5.5	0	0.0
Rose	27	39.8	14.3	17	63.0
Safford	6	35.8	13.2	3	50.0
Van Buskirk	25	36.6	17.9	17	68.0
Total	137	38.4	18.3	77	56.2

Note. Students not active in grade 2 in fall 1984 were excluded from the analysis. Lawrence students were served by a Chapter I RLRT instead of a LECS teacher.

Table B. Differences Between Correlated Pre-Posttest NCE means for Chapter I Students in grade two in 1983-84 on the CAT/c Reading Test.

School	N	CAT/c, 11 Posttest Mean	S.D.	CAT/c, 12 Posttest M	S.D.	Diff.
Cavett	7	40.6	8.3	26.8	9.9	-13.6***
Drachman	7	30.1	14.1	16.0	12.6	-14.1**
Hollinger	11	35.0	24.4	26.8	16.9	-8.2 N.S.
Lawrence	10	27.3	13.0	32.6	11.9	5.3 N.S.
Manzo	18	26.3	11.4	36.0	10.3	9.7**
Mission View	8	25.1	5.4	27.1	9.3	2.0 N.S.
Ochoa	6	30.5	9.9	30.8	10.1	.3 N.S.
Pueblo Gardens	15	28.7	6.5	26.7	12.5	-2.0 N.S.
Rose	19	32.7	17.6	31.0	13.3	01.7 N.S.
Safford	7	31.7	5.1	45.4	11.1	13.7**
Van Buskirk	19	34.1	12.1	33.3	13.4	0.8 N.S.
Total	127	30.9	13.5	30.8	13.3	-.1 N.S.

Note. Students not active in grade 3 in fall 1984 were excluded from the analysis. Lawrence students were served by a Chapter I RLRT instead of a LECS teacher.

** p<.01
*** p<.001

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10/24/84

Table C. Pre-posttest Raw Score Gains from April 1983 to April 1984 for Grade 2 Chapter I LECS Participants tested on the CAT/c, Level 11, Reading Subtest

School	N	Posttest Mean	Posttest S.D.	Posttest M	Posttest S.D.	Diff.
Cavett	7	32.3	6.3	38.1	6.2	5.8*
Drachman	7	27.1	8.4	36.8	7.4	9.7***
Hollinger	11	27.7	13.5	38.0	10.4	10.3*
Menzo	15	24.9	4.8	44.7	9.3	19.8***
Mission View	7	23.0	3.2	32.7	7.0	9.7**
Ochoa	10	26.4	5.9	37.2	7.0	9.7**
Pueblo Gardens	17	25.6	4.4	38.0	8.6	12.4***
Rose	16	34.9	5.3	44.8	7.6	9.9***
Safford	7	27.7	3.4	53.6	3.1	25.9***
Van Buskirk	11	24.5	5.0	45.4	9.4	20.9***
Total	108	27.6	7.3	41.2	9.4	13.6***

Note. Students were tested one year before grade level on the posttest.

* $p<.05$
** $p<.01$
*** $p<.001$

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Appendix C

Sustained Gains Study of the First Cohort of the Chapter 1 ECS Project

Sustained Gains Study of First Cohort of the Chapter I Language Enrichment Communicative Skills (LECS) Project

Helen B. Slaughter
Chapter 1 Research Evaluator

Background

The Chapter I Language Enrichment Communicative Skills (LECS) Project was initiated in the 1981-82 school year as a project designed to develop the oral language competencies and early literacy skills, of K-2 students who were referred by their classroom teachers. The project was based in part on a Chapter I project developed in the Phoenix Elementary School District by Karen Smith. The project also was based upon recent research in sociolinguistics and early literacy suggesting that activity-based, oral-language interactive and print-rich learning environments would be highly conducive to preventing failure in the early years. The project was implemented by former Title I project assistants who were highly skilled in working with Title I-Chapter I students.

Procedure

The present sustained-gains or follow-up study concerns the progress of 102 grade 2 LECS participants over a three year period. During the 1981-82 school year 171 students participated in the project but only 80 were included in the pre-post test Title I evaluation that year. Of these students, 102 remained enrolled in the TUSD in 1983-84.

The original LECS grade 2 group included 41 (40%) students who had been retained in grade 2 for the second year. Not all of the students were tested on the CAT/C reading every year. For instance, 24 former LECS participants were not tested on the CAT/C at the end of grade 3 (all but 2 were still in Chapter I elementary schools). Some of these students may have been LECS participants served by the bilingual resource teachers.

Results

The results displayed in Tables 1 & 2 show that while little gain was made in terms of National Curve Equivalents (NCE) on the CAT between the end of grade 1 and 2, students who had been in the LECS project in grade 2 made statistically significant mean NCE gains of 4.9 between the end of grade two and the end of grade 3. A repeated measures analysis of variance design (Table 2) indicated that 51 students who had test scores at all three data points made statistically significant gains between grade 2 and 3 on the CAT/C reading.

Conclusion

In conclusion, students participating in the Chapter I LECS project because they were considered high risk in terms of oral communicative competencies and beginning reading at the beginning of grade two, made significant gains in reading achievement by the end of grade three. This was true for former LECS students tested at the end of grade two and three and also for a smaller number tested over three years from the end of grade one.

Students participating in the LECS project in grade two, in the two years since its inception, have made gains in terms of raw scores, i.e. number of items correct, on out of level testing when the test they were given at the end of previous grade level was repeated. However, they have not made gains in terms of their relative standing in comparison to their peers on national norms on the grade-level CAT during the project year. In as much as these students are selected because their performance and developmental level is far below average, and also because the district as a whole scores lower at grade one than grade two, out-of-level and/or other alternative evaluation approaches appear more appropriate during the second grade, followed by a sustained gains study of these students in grade three. The gains observed at the end of grade three are doubtless due to some extent to the continued participation of some of the students in the Chapter I Reading Language Resource Teacher Project.

See Attached Tables

References

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TABLE I: Sustaining Gains Study of First Cohort (1981-82) of LECS Grade 2 Participants

	CAT/C Reading		
	N	Mean	SD
Grade 1	63	27.5	14.3
Grade 2	63	27.5	12.0
Diff		00.0	12.0
Grade 1	51	27.5	13.7
Grade 3	51	33.7	10.7
Diff.		6.2*	
Grade 2	78	27.3	12.6
Grade 3	78	32.2	12.1
Diff.		4.9*	

*$p < .05$

TABLE 2: **CAT/C Reading Test Scores Over three years for First Cohort (1981-82) of Grade 2 LECS Participants (N=51)**

		M	S.D	%/ile
Score 1	**CAT** Reading First Grade	27.5	13.7	15
Score 2	**CAT** Reading Second Grade	27.8	12.1	15
Score 3	**CAT** Reading Third Grade	33.7*	10.7	22

NOTE: A one-way repeated measures analysis of variance (F=6.2, p .01) indicated that the **NCE** difference of 5.9 between grade 2 and grade 3 test scores was significent.

Appendix D

Descriptive Analysis of Writing Samples

Descriptive Analysis of Writing Samples

Collected in LECS Centers

During the School Year 1983-84

Myna M. Haussler, Ph.D.
Chapter I Instructional Developer and Program Documenter
October 31, 1984

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF WRITING SAMPLES COLLECTED IN LECS CENTERS DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR 1983-1984

In a memo dated September 29, 1983, Chapter I LECS teachers were requested to collect writing samples from all students in their centers. The samples were collected three times during the school year - fall, winter, and spring. This type of data collection provides a direct measure of Chapter I students' writing, that is to say the evaluation of writing is accomplished by having students write.

Three purposes for analyzing these writing samples include:

1) Providing one alternative form of evaluation of Chapter I Programs (using the LECS as a model).

2) Providing teachers with diagnostic information on students' writing for instructional planning.

3) Improving instruction through the introduction of new ways to look at writing and providing a model of writing evaluation for teachers.

This report includes the procedures, findings, recommendations, and school-by-school data analysis of children's writing.

Procedures for Collection of Data:

LECS teachers were asked to collect writing samples from each of their students three times during the school year, 1983-84. The request was made for the collection of one sample which was open ended and one in which students were given a topic. While 10 teachers turned in samples of each students' writing, only 2 teachers followed the procedures outlined in the original memo and collected 2 samples each time. Most collected only 1 sample each time. Two teachers submitted writing samples one time only, at the beginning of the school year and these two sets of samples were not included in this report.

Samples which were turned in to the Chapter I office were photocopied and the originals were returned to the LECS teachers to keep as part of the students' records. It was the photocopies which were analyzed to describe the writing development of first and second grade students in the LECS program.

Procedures for Analysis of Writing Samples:

A sample of the writing from each of 10 LECS Centers was analyzed to describe students' writing development. At least 4 sets of writing samples from each Center were described - the writing of 2 first graders and 2 second graders. Where interesting data were available additional students' writings were described.

Students' writing was analyzed using a modification of the Analysis of Story Telling developed by M. Haussler and C. Thompkins for use in a research project with students in Hotevilla, Arizona. Each writing sample was described in terms of the

message it communicated and in terms of the representation of that message in print (the conventions of print, such as grammar, punctuation, spelling and capitalization).

The following is an outline of the analysis procedure which was used in the description of Chapter I first and second grade students' writing.

Message

A. Development of message

1. Description of content (what actually was chosen to write about)
2. Description and number of ideas and events being conveyed
   a. Events and ideas are carefully considered and arranged in a manner appropriate to the development of the overall message
   b. Irrelevant information is included which distracts the reader from understanding the message clearly or there is information missing (gaps in presentation)
   c. No clear message is conveyed - information occurs randomly

B. Message organization

1. Sense of story
   a. Concept of "story"
   b. Characters
   c. Conflict resolution
   d. Literary conventions

      1) Beginning, ending conventions
      2) Personification

2. Sequencing
   a. Sequence of action - beginning, middle, end
   b. Cohesion

      1) Sentences or paragraphs are interrelated as opposed to

         a) Parts are cohesive but there is less meaning between parts
         b) Message elements are out of order or a seemingly unrelated element intrudes on structure
         c) Chaining sentences
         d) Unrelated sentences

      2) Use of connectives, such as

so	before	this time	then
but	when	the next day	and then
soon	after that	at first	as soon as
while	next	at the same time	

Representation

A. Developing concepts about print

1. Knowledge that print represents a message
2. Maintenance of message
3. Drawing/alphabetic
4. Directionality

B. Developing conventions of writing (form)

1. Orthographic concepts
   a. Recognizable forms of language (letters)
   b. Development of spelling
      1) Letter strings/spacing
      2) Invented spelling - transitions - conventional spelling
   c. Conventions of punctuation, capitals and lower case
   d. Overgeneralizations
2. Arranging print on page

C. Developing organization of text

1. Sentence level
   a. Writes in complex sentence
   b. Varying sentence patterns
   c. Grammatical influence of dialect
   d. Other symbolic factors
2. Beyond sentence level - an appropriate text structure selected for representation of ideas i.e., paragraphs, letter form (Dear ___, Sincerely,)

Findings:

When asked to write, most of the first graders and all of the second graders used letters of the alphabet to represent their message in their first writing sample (In October or November). In the last two samples all students used an alphabetic representation to write their message (usually in January and March or April). All showed their knowledge that print can communicate a message. They wrote a variety of messages including lists of words found in the classroom environment, lists of words they could spell, poetry found on charts in the class, one sentence about themselves, stories about personal experiences, stories from topics (or holidays) studied in class, and fantasy. As the year progressed, most students developed their content more fully and their writing was generally of greater length.

All students developed greater knowledge of the forms of writing, such as spelling, sentence structure, capitalization, and punctuation. As the year progressed all children wrote in a more conventional or "adult-like" form. All demonstrated some knowledge of letter-sound correspondence. Often writing of second graders was mostly conventional while first graders were recognizing beginning and ending consonants. More sentences and short stories were written than lists of words after the beginning of the year. Second graders showed clear understanding of when capitals and lower case letters are used. First graders were still working on these concepts. Perhaps most interesting is the use of punctuation -particularly periods. Most students showed growing knowledge of when to use periods and several examples of overgeneralization are seen. When children learn new rules about language they apply it liberally to many cases before they define the correct usage. In oral language, an example is where the child says, "I goed to the store." In punctuation learning many periods are written where they seem inappropriate, yet it is possible to tell that the child is exploring a rule. Sometimes the child experiments by putting a period at the end of every line or every word. That child is figuring out where the period actually goes and will soon develop more conventional use of punctuation. Much of these exploration was observed in the writing samples.

One last tentative finding which bears future study is that it appears that in LECS classrooms where students write frequently their writing is longer and more cohesive than in classrooms where personal writing occurs less frequently. It is difficult to ascertain which classrooms have greater use of conventional spelling, etc., because it is not known if any teachers gave students strategies or other assistance while they were writing.

Discussion and Recommendations:

It certainly took teachers extra time to set up the opportunity to have children write for purposes of evaluation. Yet it has given both the LECS staff and the evaluators a great deal of information about our first and second graders' writing and reading development. When looking at children's writing, it is possible to tell if they have a concept of communication through print, a sense of story, understanding of what a word is, and knowledge of letter-sound correspondence. All of these are essential to childrens' reading as well as writing.

While valuable information was gained, one factor affected the analysis - that of context. New teachers who began after the fall LECS orientation did not fully understand the purpose of the data collection and therefore students often did not see the purpose. Since most teachers collected only one sample at a time, it is not possible to tell if the sample was prompted or unprompted - whether the teacher gave students a topic or not. It also is not possible from the data we collected to tell if students were interested in the assignment or not, if the children generated their own writing or copied from print in the room, or whether the writing was based on some piece of literature or information previously studied. In studying the samples, it becomes apparent that more information is needed when an Evaluator or Program Documenter analyzes writing samples alone without teacher input. The teacher/evaluator team would be much more accurate in analyzing the samples because there are a variety of unanswered questions that the teacher knows (such as the dominant language of the child, whether he/she is a risk taker, or where the child pointed when re-reading what was written).

In future analyses, it is recommended that Evaluators:

1) Work closely with LECS teachers to analyze samples so that the context and process can be clearly described by the teachers.

2) Explain purposes thoroughly to teachers who participate - meeting privately with any new staff members who require assistance.

3) Explain the value of this study to LECS for use in parent meetings, child study teams, etc. The information gives a clear picture of what a child is capable of doing.

4) Discuss Graves' conference approach to writing with the LECS teachers so that knowledge gained through analysis of children's writing can be incorporated in the children's developing writing.